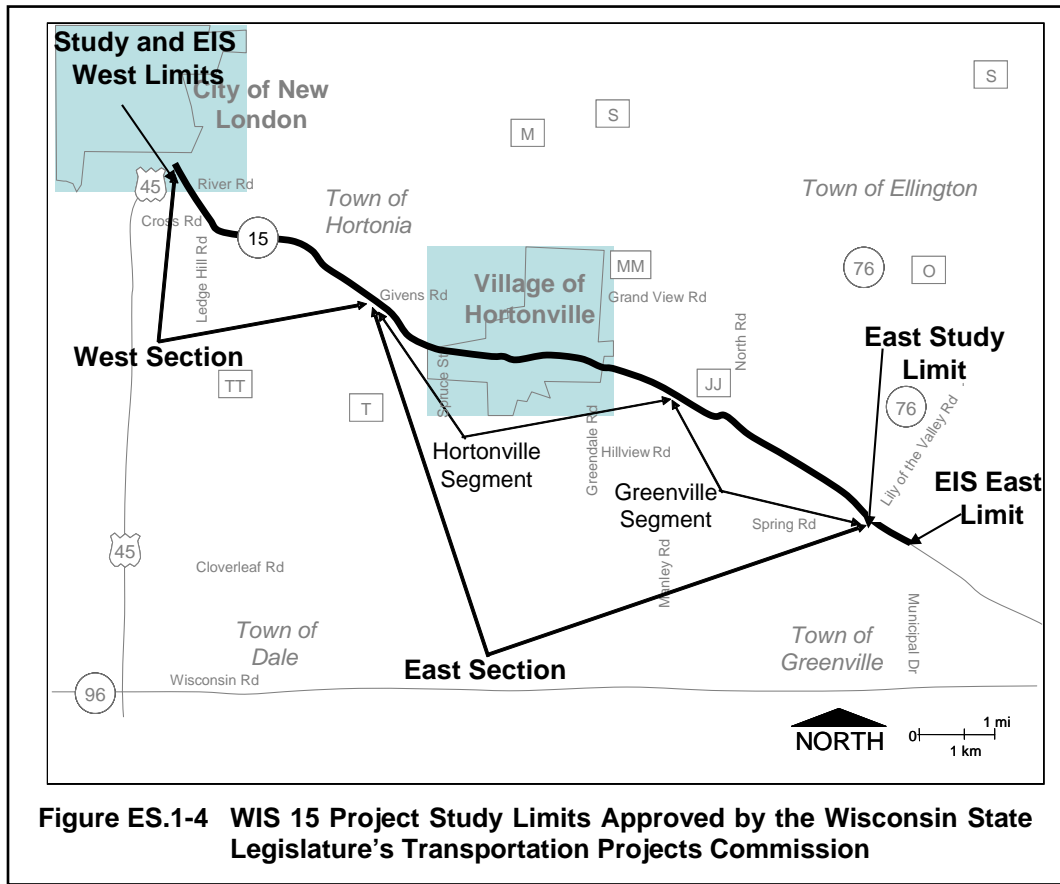


## ES EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### ES.1 LOCATION

The following Environmental Impact Statement describes and discusses environmental consequences associated with a potential transportation project located on WIS 15 in northeast Wisconsin. The project corridor, in Outagamie County, begins at US 45 in the City of New London and extends approximately 11 miles through the Village of Hortonville, ending just west of the Town of Greenville and WIS 76. Figures ES.1-1, ES.1-2, and ES.1-3 are maps of the proposed alternatives on the project corridor. Figure ES.1-4 below, shows the project study limits.



### ES.2 DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING FACILITY

Existing WIS 15 is a two-lane highway that is constructed of various types of pavements. Horizontal and vertical curves are located within the project limits and are generally adequate for the posted speeds. The highway is 24 feet wide with 3-foot paved and 8-foot gravel shoulders. Approximately 300 access points are located within the project limits. Access points along WIS 15 are a combination of agricultural, commercial, industrial, residential, local roads and streets, and county and state highways.

### ES.3 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is to expand WIS 15 to provide increased capacity between the City of New London and the Town of Greenville, with the possibility of a bypass of the Village of Hortonville. The expansion would provide for an efficient transportation system for the WIS 15 corridor and would serve present and long-term traffic while minimizing disturbance to the surrounding environment. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) will choose a preferred alternative after gathering input from the public, municipalities, and participating agencies.

## ES.4 PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose for improvements to WIS 15 between Greenville and New London is to provide a safe and dependable transportation corridor by eliminating design deficiencies, reducing congestion, minimizing access, and preserving the corridor for future transportation use. WIS 15 needs to provide a high level of service, safety, and mobility in this commuter route of northeastern Wisconsin.

Currently, WIS 15 exhibits inadequate physical characteristics compared to standards for rural state trunk highways. Heavy traffic volumes in combination with through traffic and truck traffic impede the local operational characteristics of WIS 15. Most WIS 15 traffic has destinations and origins beyond Hortonville, yet all WIS 15 traffic must travel through Hortonville's urban section. Through traffic hinders and makes local turning movements more difficult (see Figure ES.1-2). Local traffic interrupts through traffic and increases the crash potential. Traffic volumes are growing to a point where the local traffic–regional traffic tension will grow more pronounced, affecting service levels and possibly travel safety. Figure ES.4-1 illustrates WIS 15 going through Hortonville.



Figure ES.4-1 WIS 15 Through Hortonville

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will analyze the improvement alternatives designed to address the identified needs while also seeking to understand the environmental, cultural, socioeconomic, and land use impacts of the corridor alternatives.

## ES.5 ALTERNATIVES

Corridor alternatives were developed using local input and based on information compiled on composite constraint maps of the area, engineering feasibility, and design standards. The constraint maps contained property lines, homes, businesses, farms, buildings, wetlands, historic sites, archaeological sites, cemeteries, potentially contaminated sites, quarries and drainage features. The alternatives retained for detailed study were selected based on the ability to fulfill the purpose and need discussed below.

### A. No Build

Under the No Build Alternative, WIS 15 would not be expanded to provide additional roadway capacity or a bypass. Any future work along WIS 15 would attempt to maintain current capacity levels, preserve an acceptable roadway surface, and address safety concerns at critical locations.

The No Build Alternative would fail to address future traffic demands, highway deficiencies, and safety concerns throughout the WIS 15 corridor. The No Build will serve as a comparison to the Build Alternatives discussed in the study.

**B. Build Alternatives**

All the alternatives selected for the 10.7-mile detailed study are viable build options that satisfy the project purpose and need. There are four major alternatives and two options being considered that provide the best alignments while balancing the overall impacts to adjacent development and environmental resources to the extent possible and practical.

The alternatives for the project are split into two sections—west and east—for comparison. The west section begins at the intersection of US 45 and WIS 15 in the City of New London and continues 3.4 miles southeasterly to the intersection with County T and Givens Road. The East Section continues 7.3 miles southeasterly from the County T/Givens Road intersection, through the Village of Hortonville, and ends to the east of Julius Road in Greenville. Two options are being considered in the West Section (Options A and B) in addition to the four alternatives in the East Section (Alternatives 1 through 4). These options and alternatives are independent of each other and could be selected in any combination.

1. West Section—Option A: Expansion along existing highway

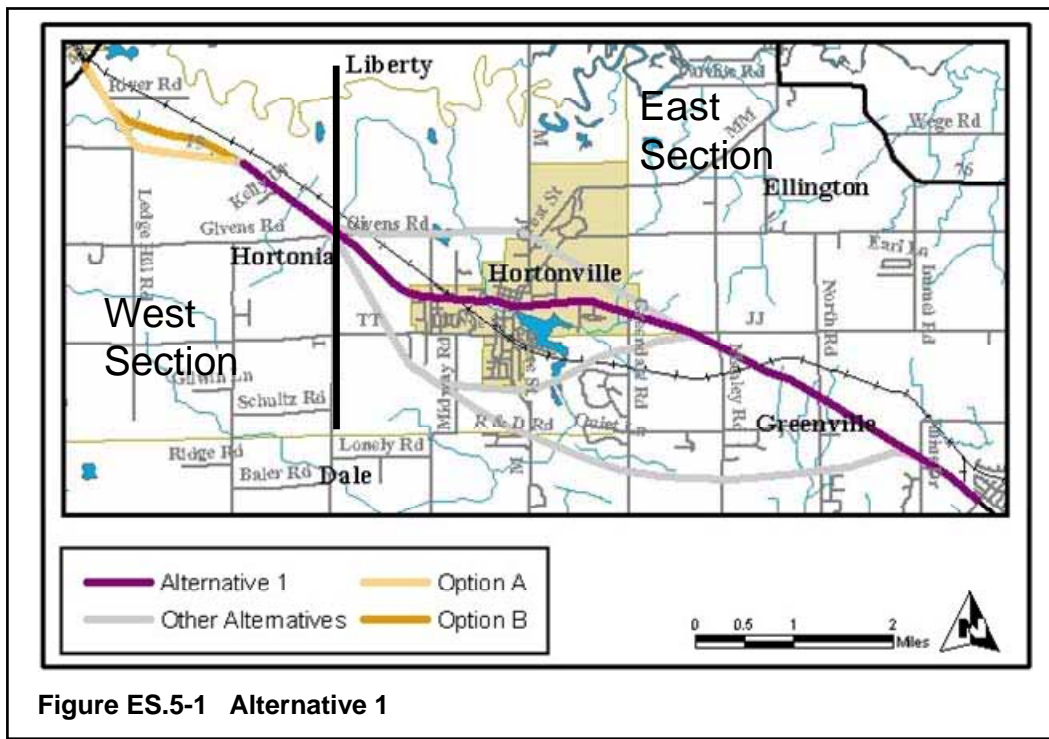
This option would expand the road along the existing roadway for approximately 3.4 miles in length. The existing roadway would be used for one set of lanes. Safety concerns in the area would be addressed by increasing sight distances of the two curves at the intersection of Cross/Ledge Hill Roads and at the rock outcrop located just over a mile east of Cross Road.

2. West Section—Option B: Off alignment

For Option B, the highway expansion would initially occur along the existing roadway just south of the existing WIS 15/US 45 intersection in New London. South of River Road, the highway would travel off the existing roadway alignment for about 1.4 miles east. The relocated section would have four lanes of rural highway crossing over mostly agricultural land northeast of the current WIS 15 intersection with Cross and Ledge Hill Roads. This alignment would avoid the existing, dangerous curve at Cross Road and would then converge back to the existing roadway near the visible rock outcrop on WIS 15, effectively straightening the existing curve. The remaining 1.2 miles will follow the existing roadway to the intersection of County T and Givens Road, where Alternatives 1 through 4 begins.

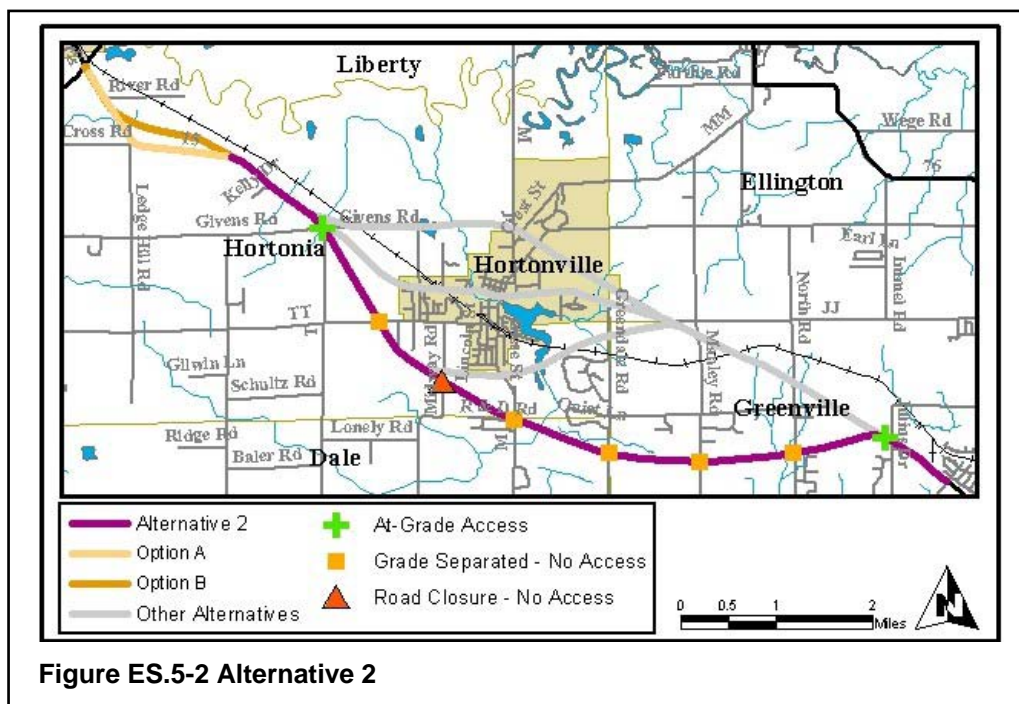
3. East Section—Alternative 1

Alternative 1, shown in Figure ES.5-1, would expand the existing two-lane WIS 15 to four lanes. There would be a divided section along the existing rural roadway from the Givens Road/County T intersection until reaching the Village of Hortonville limits, near Industrial Park Drive. An urban four-lane section without parking continues through the Village of Hortonville. The downtown portions, roughly between Cherry Street and Olk Street, currently have on-street parking and would require a wider section, and several property acquisitions to be able to maintain on-street parking spaces and a four-lane section. Turn lanes would also be necessary at County M and possibly at Warner Street to accommodate school traffic. A divided section would continue to the east project limits near Greenville. The existing roadway would be used for two of the four lanes as much as possible. Possible 4(f) impacts include several parks in the downtown Hortonville area along with the Hortonia Town Hall located at the intersection of Givens Road and County T. Access to local roads would likely stay the same with this alternative.



4. East Section–Alternative 2

This alternative is a rural four-lane highway expansion built off the existing alignment (see Figure ES.5-2). Alternative 2 turns southeast from the County T/Givens Road intersection, through farmland to Midway Road, going through recently annexed land and a portion of a recently developed Industrial Park for Hortonville. From Midway Road, the highway continues eastward over the Wiouwash State Trail and through a low drainage section upstream of Black Otter Lake. The new roadway cuts through rolling farmland and nearby intermittent residential developments until converging again with existing WIS 15 just west of Julius Road. This alternative will likely have grade separations across five side roads and one closure of Midway road. There is a possible 4(f) historical impact with the Hortonia Town Hall at the intersection of Givens Road and County T. Approximately 6.5 miles of existing highway through Hortonville would likely be transferred to a local jurisdiction.



5. East Section—Alternative 3

The north bypass, Alternative 3, is a rural four-lane highway expansion of WIS 15 running east from the intersection of WIS 15/County T/Givens Road. The alternative goes through agricultural fields and the upper reaches of the Wolf River floodplain and passes north of the Grandview Golf Course and community athletic fields. The eastern section of the alternative is considerably inclined and would likely require large cuts into the hillside and the use of a narrow median to reduce the impacts. Alternative 3, shown in Figure ES.5-3, also turns southeast over Grandview Road via a grade separation and passes north of the Hortonville Elementary School. There is also a possible 4(f) historical impact of the Hortonville Town Hall at the intersection of Givens Road and County T.

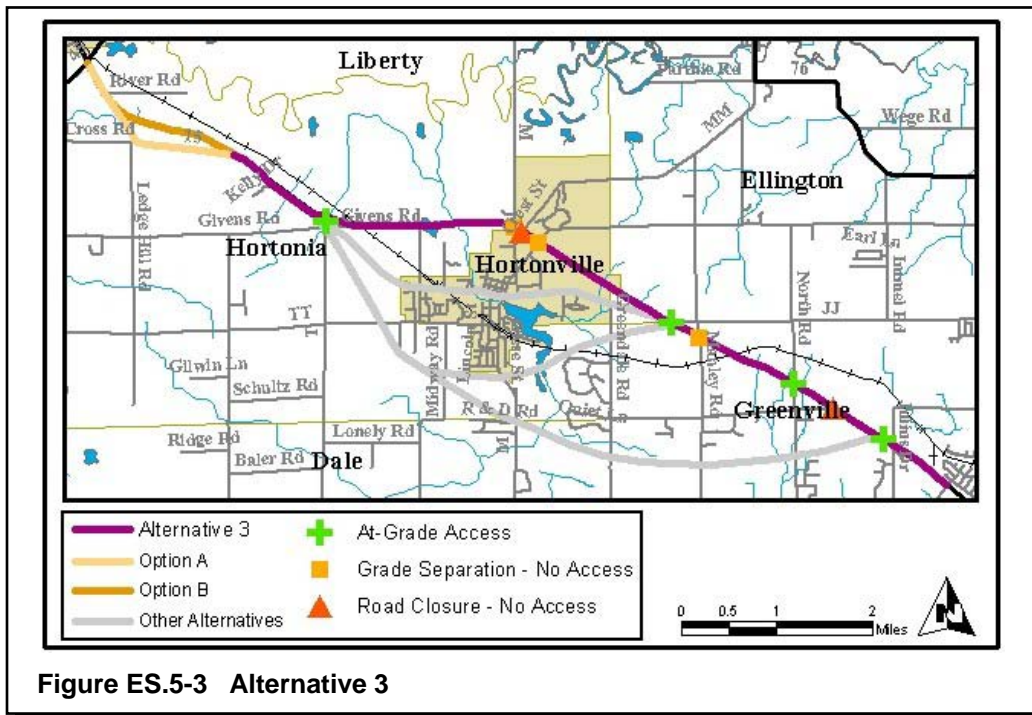


Figure ES.5-3 Alternative 3

6. East Section—Alternative 4

Alternative 4 follows the same path as Alternative 2 from the County T/Givens Road intersection southeast to the intersection with Midway Road. This alternative would consist of over 5 miles of new four-lane rural highway off the existing road. This area is mostly wetlands, woods, and rural residential properties. The alternative converges with the existing WIS 15 near the intersection of County JJ and follows the existing roadway to Greenville. See Figure ES.5-4.

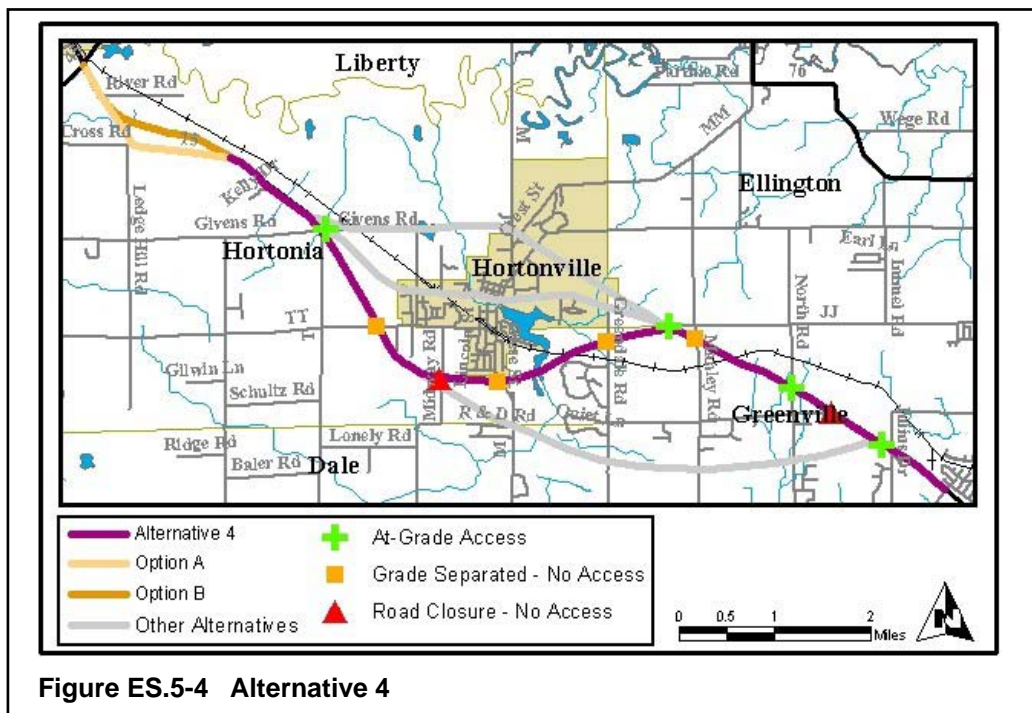


Figure ES.5-4 Alternative 4

### C. Other Alternatives Not Selected for Detailed Study

Five other alternatives were considered during the corridor study but were not carried forward in the detailed study analysis:

#### 1. Nonhighway Transportation Alternative

This alternative considers light rail, mass transit, and related improvements. The implementation and/or expansion of any one of these modes must be economically reasonable and viable. Presently, there is no rail passenger service or public bus transit in the project area. The unavailability of these services is due to insufficient demand at this time.

#### 2. Transportation System Management

Transportation System Management (TSM) consists of using low-cost improvements to increase the traffic flow on the existing highway. The goal of TSM is to increase the efficiency of the existing transportation system with a minimum of undesirable social and economic impacts. After consideration, this alternative would not solve the capacity problems throughout the corridor.

#### 3. Reconstruct Existing Roadway

This alternative would include reconstruction of the existing roadway cross section both in rural sections along with urban sections found within the Village of Hortonville. Reconstruction in Hortonville would most likely include left- and right-turn lanes, improvements at intersections, and possible traffic signals additions. Nearly the entire stretch of WIS 15 between New London and Greenville has reached its useful life and needs reconstruction and design improvements to enhance safety. This alternative is not compatible with the long-term, areawide transportation goals.

#### 4. Three-Lane Roadway (TWLTL and Passing Lanes)

This alternative would include reconstruction of the existing roadway cross section and portion of a lane for turning vehicles. It would improve the safety of WIS 15; however, it does not fully meet the objectives of the purpose and need. With this alternative, substantial amount of through traffic would still be traveling through Hortonville.

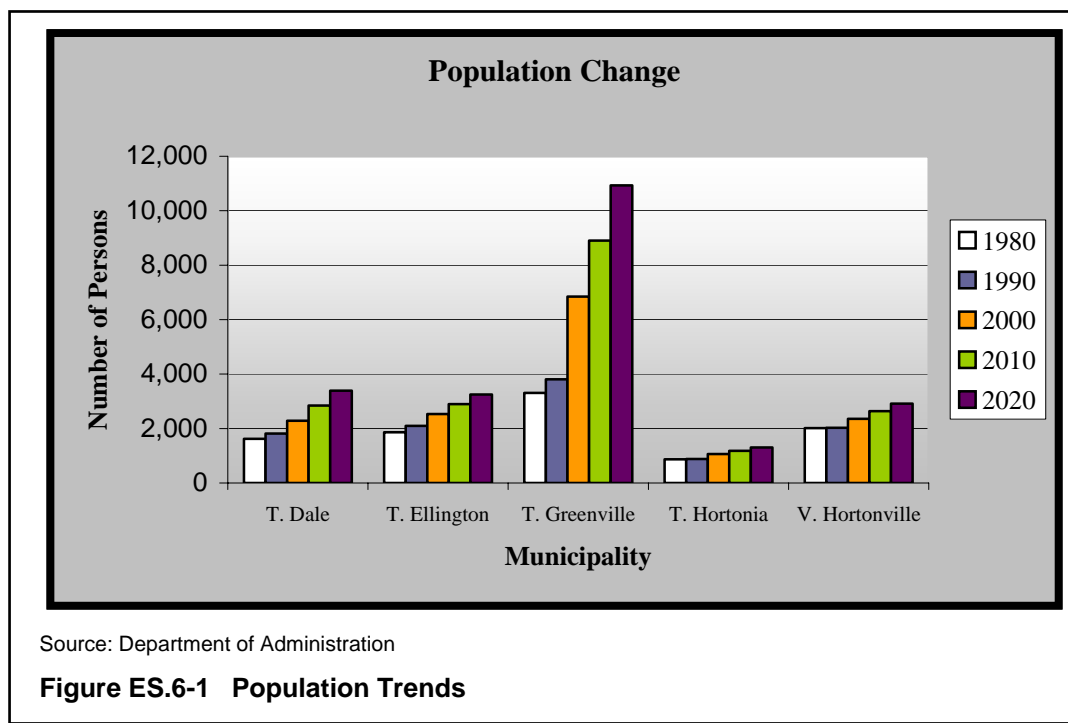
## 5. Other Alternative Routes

Many alternative routes were proposed by citizen focus groups during the May 2003 public information meeting, the Value Engineering Study of July 2003, by local municipalities, and WisDOT input. These routes were not chosen for detailed consideration because they did not meet WisDOT design requirements, they conflicted with the railroad, there were large relocation costs, or they were dismissed for other reasons by the WIS 15 Public Advisory Committee (PAC).

### ES.6 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Information regarding the natural, cultural, and socioeconomic environment along with land use and planning in the WIS 15 study area is included in the Affected Environment Section 3. This review by the study team of the affected environment establishes the background for the improvements to WIS 15 and their impacts.

The affected environmental section includes information about the natural environment and geographical setting of the area. The resources described are natural and conservancy areas, surface water and fishery, floodplains, groundwater and water supply, wetlands, and uplands. The wildlife, endangered or threatened species, air quality, noise, contaminated materials, soils and mineral resources, and aesthetics were other environmental issues discussed in this section. The cultural environment was also described in the Archaeological and Historical Resources and Environmental Justice information. The socioeconomic environment was explained using population levels and trends (see Figure ES.6-1 below), household characteristics, community characteristics, employment, and work force characteristics, and other economic characteristics. Finally, the section depicts land use and related characteristics using residential, commercial/industrial, area communities, public use lands, agricultural land, institutions, cemeteries, planning and zoning, land use patterns, and transportation.



### ES.7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A detailed discussion of environmental consequences is included in Section 4. The Environmental Cost Matrix and Environmental Factors Matrix list impacts of the detailed study alternatives in a format designed for quick comparison. Detailed factor sheets are also provided for more explanation about each of the various environmental impacts.

Environmental impacts are assessed for each corridor alternative. The analysis of impacts includes a review of air and noise effects, farmland taken out of production, residential and business relocations,

wetlands removed, endangered species impacted, potential archaeological and historical sites that may be eligible on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), possible contaminated sites, public and private access points, estimated right-of-way required, public input, and costs. These impacts are discussed in Section 4.

All build alternatives will have some adverse environmental impacts. The project must balance the concern for environmental protection with economic development, including indirect and cumulative effects (see Figure ES.7-1 below). To help achieve this, environmental impacts will be minimized through design that reduces impacts where possible. Mitigation will be provided in several ways including the creation of adjacent or off-site wetland areas and the improvement of public crossings, trails, and access points.

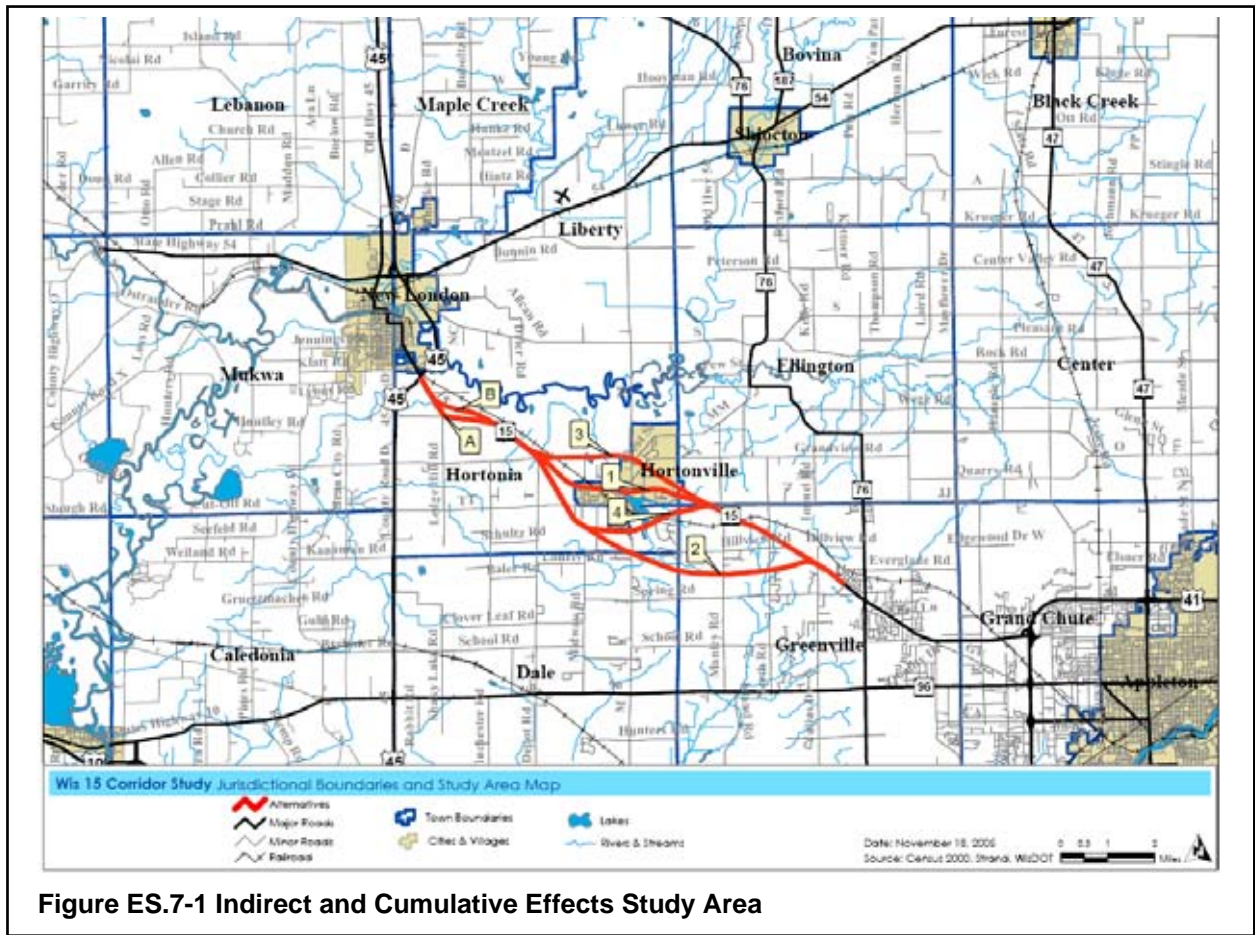


Figure ES.7-1 Indirect and Cumulative Effects Study Area

Environmental Issue	Unit Measure	No Build	West Section		East Section			
			A	B	1	2	3	4
Total R/W	Acres	0	122	135	305	409	342	385
Wetlands	Acres	0	0.9-6.3	1.2-13.0	1.3-12.4	2.7-28.8	11.5-24.1	3.8-30.7
Agriculture	Acres	0	52	76	94	254	163	186
Other	Acres	0	47	37	179	99	134	126
Housing Units Req	Number	0	9	7	47	3	17	13
Com Units Req	Number	0	11	7	19	0	4	1
Costs	Million \$	0	11.9	11.1	27.3	36.0	32.1	36.2

Table ES.7-1 Alternative Comparison

## ES.8 COOPERATING AGENCY

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the lead agency for this EIS under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). WisDOT is conducting the environmental and engineering evaluations, providing public involvement, coordinating with state and federal agencies Native American Tribes, and preparing the EIS in consultation with FHWA.

The US Army Corps of Engineers (COE) is a Cooperating Agency for the DEIS as prescribed in 33 CFR 230. In accordance with COE regulations under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the COE remains impartial until an independent public interest review has been completed. See Section VI for a copy of the COE letter indicating their acceptance of the project purpose and need and project range of alternatives presented in the DEIS.

## ES.9 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

This document is in compliance with U.S. DOT and FHWA policies to determine whether a proposed project will have induced socioeconomic impacts or any other adverse impacts on minority or low-income populations; and it meets the requirements of Executive Order on Environmental Justice 12898—*Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations*. Minority or low-income individuals may be dispersed throughout the study area, though no known minority or low-income populations will be adversely impacted as a result of any of the alternatives selected for detailed study.

## ES.10 OTHER ACTIVITIES REQUIRED

Other activities to be completed with this project include:

- Relocation Assistance Plans for displaced residents and businesses require approval by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce under Wis. Stats. 32.25.
- Stream and wetland impacts associated with the Recommended Alternative are subject to individual Section 404 permits required by the Army Corp of Engineers.
- A water quality certification, Section 401 permit is required by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR).
- The proposed highway improvement project will be in accordance with the standards of erosion control and storm water management established in TRANS 401.
- Cultural resource impacts require coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) and completion of requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Coordination and consultation with interested Native American tribes will be conducted throughout the course of this project.
- A Farmland Conversion Impact Rating form was completed and submitted to Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS).
- Any relocation of WIS 15 will require a change in official location under WIS Statute 84. In addition, the jurisdictional transfer of portions of the existing highway to an appropriate local unit of government may be required.
- Mitigation commitments for affected Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) properties will be completed.

## ES.11 REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

The planning, agency coordination, public involvement, and impact evaluation for the project have been conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Clean Water Act, Executive Orders regarding wetland and floodplain protection, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Executive Order on Environmental Justice 12898, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and other state and federal laws, policies, and procedures for environmental impact analyses and preparation of environmental documents.

## **ES.12 PUBLIC CONCERNS AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES**

To date, the meetings and other coordination activities have indicated several main concerns to those interested in the project. The following general issues have been raised: conversion of farmland, impacts to farm operations, impacts to wetlands, uplands, and wildlife habitats, and safety concerns. A detailed account of public comments is included in Section 7. Additionally, impact refinement and additional agency coordination will need to occur once a preferred alternative has been selected.

## **ES.13 PROJECT BENEFITS**

The proposed project will provide the following benefits:

- Improve operational efficiency.
- Provide a safe and dependable highway connection to and from regional communities while reducing conflicts between local and through traffic.
- Improve the highway facility to meet current design standards for this important route in Wisconsin.
- Improve safety at intersections and farm crossings.
- Increase mobility by adding capacity and minimizing public and private access.
- Preserve corridor for future transportation use by coordinating local governmental land use plans. This will alleviate development pressures on WIS 15 and intersecting roads, preserving the corridor for future transportation use.
- Maintain a high mobility facility while addressing the increased traffic needs of the expanding urban area.